

Serial No.: 10/814,583
Atty. Docket No.: P69488US0

REMARKS

The Office Action mailed October 27, 2005, has been carefully reviewed and by this Amendment, claims 1-16 and 21-25 have been canceled, claims 17, 18 and 20 have been amended and new claims 26-45 have been added. Accordingly, claims 17-20 and 26-45 are pending in the application. Claims 17 and 35 are independent. In view of the amendments, the new claims and the following remarks, favorable reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested.

The Examiner rejected claims 17, 18 and 20 under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,622,442 to Kwon. Under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), the Examiner rejected claim 19 as being unpatentable over Kwon.

As clarified in amended claim 17 and also set forth in new claim 35, the present invention is directed to a male and female connector system for interconnecting reinforcing elements embedded in a pair of mating concrete structures, each concrete structure having an upper surface and a side edge that abuts with the side edge of the other concrete structure, and the upper surfaces preferably being in general alignment when the structures are connected.

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The connector system includes a reinforcing element in a first one of the mating concrete structures having an end projecting beyond the side edge thereof that has an enlarged head thereon to form a male connector. A female socket fixture is connected to a reinforcing element in the second concrete structure and positioned along the side edge thereof. The *top* of the female socket fixture *is open to the upper surface* of the concrete structure for receiving the male connector therethrough. This structure in which the *top* of the socket fixture is open to the *upper surface* allows the male connector to be dropped down into the fixture in a generally vertical direction, which greatly facilitates the ease with which one concrete structure can be aligned and connected with another, particularly as compared with complicated side-insertion structures such as Kwon.

Kwon relies upon a cumbersome horizontal execution in which threaded ends of complementary male and female components must be carefully aligned and precisely joined to obtain a successful connection, with little or no tolerance for variations in alignment. This connection mechanism is exacting and time-consuming to successfully employ, particularly when working with large and correspondingly heavy concrete structures.

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The claimed structure of the present invention, by contrast, in which the female socket fixture is open to the upper surface to receive the male connector vertically, does not require exact placement of the concrete structures relative to one another as the socket fixture is larger than the male connector so as to accommodate something less than perfect alignment. The insertion of the male connector through the upper surface of the concrete structure also makes alignment easier as the upper surface is most visible to an equipment operator who is lowering the concrete structure with the male connector for connection with an already placed concrete structure having the female socket fixture.

For at least the foregoing reasons, claims 17 and 35 are patentable over Kwon. Favorable consideration and allowance thereof is requested.

Claims 18-20 and 36-45 are in condition for allowance as claims properly dependent on an allowable base claim and for the subject matter contained therein.

More particularly, the prior art does not teach or suggest a female socket fixture having a generally keyhole shaped opening with an enlarged chamber and a slot extending from the chamber to the side edge of the concrete structure as variously defined in claims 20, 28-30, and 37. Nor does the prior art

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disclose that the female socket fixture also has a keyhole shaped opening along its side edge as variously set forth in claims 26, 31-34 and 39-45. Favorable consideration and allowance of the dependent claims is therefore requested.

With this amendment and the foregoing remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for allowance. Should the Examiner have any questions or comments, the Examiner is cordially invited to telephone the undersigned attorney so that the present application can receive an early Notice of Allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date: January 27, 2006
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